

The Syrophœnician : or, a Pattern of  
Invincible Faith.

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BEING THE  
SUBSTANCE  
OF A  
DISCOURSE

Preached in

L O N D O N

In the YEAR 1750.

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By JOHN CENNICK.

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"Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye  
shall receive," Matt. xxi. 22.

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THE FIFTH EDITION.

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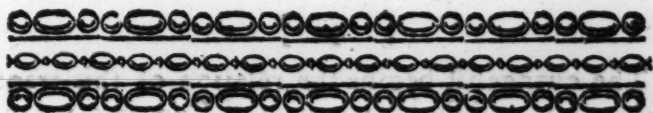
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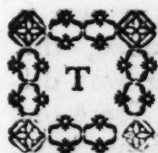
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MATT. xv. 28.

“ O woman ! great is thy faith, be it unto thee  
even as thou wilt.

 **T**HESE gracious words of our Saviour were spoken to a poor woman, a Gentile of Canaan, who having found him preaching near Tyre and Sidon, desired him to heal her daughter, who was possessed of an evil Spirit; and after some time, when she had met with several repulses from the disciples, and some trials from our Saviour himself, and yet continued her intreaties, Jesus answered her in these words, and sent her away rejoicing.

I look upon the whole history as a most instructing and comfortable part of the scripture, and as a pattern of invincible faith; and I think all relations and accounts of this sort are delivered down to us with this view and intent, that we may be stirred up and encouraged thereby to inherit by faith the promises of God, after their example who are gone before, and through their mercy obtain mercy. O may that God, whose mercies endure for ever, make it a blessing to us this day ! when it becomes the matter of our consideration, and teach us so to believe in him, that he may also once say to every one of us, “Great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt !”

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The evangelist begins the relation of this transaction thus, "Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, 'have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil,' ver. 22.

There is something very moving and worthy of note in all her prayer, and even in the manner in which she uttered it: She cried. Perhaps she saw the multitude round about him, and could not get near, which was the case of many, and yet was so eager to be helped, so needy and distressed, that she could not wait till the congregation was dismissed, and therefore cried out to him. Here one may learn, that when a soul wants the divine help, and is in distress, their best and most simple way is, to cry unto "him who is able to save," namely, Jesus Christ, who saith, "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden—and I will give you a rest for your souls," Matt. xi. 28. It is a bad sign when men can postpone and put off the time of their salvation, with faintly and coldly saying, I hope the Lord will have mercy upon me before I die. Such is not the language of one poor in spirit, nor of the soul that wants a Saviour, for then the captive exile hastens to be delivered, or as David expresses it, "My soul longeth, yea even faineth; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God," Psalm lxxxiv. 1. And again, "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," Psalm xlii. 1. So in another place he says, "One deep calleth to another:" (that is, the deep of our misery to the deep of his mercy) "Out of the deep have I called unto the Lord, O Lord hear my voice!" This is the case with awakened souls; they want deliverance.

They



They hunger and thirst after righteousness, and cannot rest till Jesus hath given them rest. Thus St. Paul, when he was first convinced of his sad estate, and felt (notwithstanding all the righteousness of which he before boasted) that he was a poor miserable sinner, neither ate nor drink for three days, but continued crying out, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me do?" Acts ix. 5. Nor did he cease crying till he had obtained redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of his sins. The same is said of the beggar Bartimeus. He cried for mercy, when he heard Jesus passed by: and when the people forbad him to pray so, he cried so much the more a great deal: and then ye know what followed; Jesus stood still, commanded him to be brought to him, granted his request and blessed him. As long as the poor blind man cried, Jesus could not go forward. His heart is so tenderly affected towards poor sinners, that he cannot leave the poor when he crieth, the needy and him that has no helper. But properly and strictly is the friend of sinners.

We have many instances in the scripture of his immediately helping such as applied to him with tears and cries, such as the poor leper, Mary Magdalene, Peter, &c. and by these we are taught to cry to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; for let who will oppose, he is the person that hears prayer. "On his name who-soever calls shall be saved," Rom. x. 13. compare Acts iv. 12.

Thus, then, the woman cried to him (the words of the prayer were) "Have mercy upon me, O Lord!" First, the inspired writers tell us she was a heathen, a Gentile, and then describe her as calling to Jesus the Lord. How can this be? It is unlikely

unlikely she had read the prophets, or expected a Messiah whose name should be Immanuel; and had she believed this, she could no longer have been reckoned among the Gentiles, but rather among the profelytes.

But the truth is, she, no doubt, had heard what a prophet, mighty in word and deed, was risen in Israel. How he healed the sick, raised the dead, cured the lepers, dispossessed dæmons, and helped all who were possessed of the devil, &c. And like as in all ages, God blesses the preaching of Jesus Christ, with the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, so then did the Lord certainly bless the report of Jesus to the poor woman by the same Spirit, and taught her who this Prophet was; wherefore she calls him Lord. "No man can call Jesus the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." And this must be allowed, that it is an eternal blessing to a soul to know Jesus, for else, how can it pray to him, or believe in him? It would not be right to call upon him, or worship him, or expect to be saved by him, if he was not God over all blessed for ever. "If thou knewest who it is that speaketh with thee, said our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John iv. 10. Thus the foundation of our praying to Jesus, and calling upon his name, is the believing that he is truly and eternally Lord and God. This was the ancient way of praying, and what has never failed. "In his name shall they glory; in his name shall they put their trust. They shall call upon his name and be saved. Prayer shall be made daily to him. To him shall all flesh come. Every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is the Lord."

The

The subject of the woman's petition was, mercy. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord!" The knowledge of our great want of mercy, has brought many thousands to the kingdom of heaven. A sense of their poor lost estate, their corrupt and spoiled heart, their degenerate nature, the guilt of sin, and a mispent life; the fear of death, the dreadful looking for of judgment, the restless condition and uneasy state of soul, makes them long with unsatiable longing for mercy. No words suit so well with a soul thus truly awakened as these, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord!" And it is to me a good sign, where a sinner cannot rest until he has obtained mercy.

But, I confess, it does not seem to be such a sense of sin which I have been speaking of, which made this woman call upon the name of our Saviour. It seems as if she had been a poor woman (perhaps a widow) who had one daughter, and she was grievously vexed of, or possessed of a devil; and hearing what wonders Jesus had wrought in healing the disease, she also comes to him and begs for her child. It was downright trouble that brought her to Christ. Perhaps she had no sense of her spiritual wants, but thought if her little daughter was but well, that was all she wanted to make her life happy. Therefore the purport of her prayer was, Lord! I am a poor woman whose daughter is possessed; on her account I have no comfort. My dear child, that should have been a joy to me in my old years and disconsolate condition, is rather a burthen, and my life is bitter to me, on this respect, have mercy upon me, and cure her. Thou hast had mercy upon very many all round about, my neigh-

neighbours tell me of thy wonders and cures, "Thou Son of David help me!" This last part of her prayer, wherein she calls our Saviour the Son of David, seems to imply so much, O Lord, who hast humbled thyself to be man, and to feel the infirmities of our nature, that thou mightest sympathize with souls in distress and pity them, think only what an uncomfortable life I have, and pity me. Indeed her case was pitiable, and she was an object of compassion, but for all that Jesus answered her not a word. This is the only place in all the bible where a poor soul in distress came, or cried to the Lord, and he answered not a word. It is so unlike our Saviour's behaviour, that at first sight we must be amazed and surprized above measure till we have seen the end of the Lord's silence, which was the effect of his tender mercy. For had our Saviour said to her, Go thy way, thy daughter is made whole, perhaps she had returned to her house thankful and glad, but asked nothing farther of him, and might indeed have been outwardly helped, but perished for ever in her sins; and therefore our Saviour intended somewhat better for her according to his usual grace, since his outward miracles were often attended with the gift of eternal life and forgiveness of sins; as in the case of the man sick of the palsy, and many others. I had observed before, that all she wanted of our Saviour, seemed nothing more than her daughter's deliverance and recovery, and therefore Jesus answered her not a word. I wonder she did not cease praying, and go home heavy and discouraged: I dare say, if many of us had been treated so, we had certainly thought there is no help for me in my God. But then

then learn hence, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Be not weary if immediately ye do not receive from him what ye ask; often we do not know what we ask; we do not feel truly our want of salvation; we do not thirst for him, and are not as if we were ready to perish without him; for he is a present help in the time of trouble, and is certainly nigh to all that call upon him. When a soul but begins to feel his wants, it is no wonder if our Saviour does not immediately answer. He knows it is best for us and safest, when we experience and feel how deeply our hearts are spoiled and corrupted, that nothing but God can save us: And when it comes so far with an awakened conscience, he is not far from the kingdom of God: He shall find, that though our Redeemer may have seemed to hide away his face for a little moment in displeasure, yet with everlasting kindness he will remember him, and end the days of his mourning, and wipe the tears from his eyes. If any therefore think, This is my case; I cry, but none hears; I am afraid Jesus will not answer me a word. Let me intreat such not to indulge unbelief: Our Saviour has no pleasure in your smart or pain, but it is wholesome and good for you; you will learn thereby the need you have of a Saviour, and know a little of that estate and torment from whence his painful death and sufferings have saved you to eternity. Learn then of the woman in the text, to follow Jesus with faith, and cry after him.

But now she meets with another discouragement, "his disciples came and besought him to put her away; for they said, she crieth after us." By this we may see she kept on crying, and was resolved not



to go away till she had got her answer. So it was with Jacob when he wrestled with the Lord in the plains: He said, "I will not let thee go till thou hast blessed me," and accordingly prevailed and got the blessing. So it is with all those who take the kingdom of heaven by violence; and those that are thus violent; those that cannot and will not rest without salvation, shall surely find it. Wo be to them who slightly heal their wounds, who cry peace when there is no peace; who content themselves because men call them good people, or because they go to church or meeting often, and attend the duties of their religion, and come no farther. These are they of whom our Saviour says, "Thou hast a name to live, but thou art dead." I wish this may not be the case of many who appear to have no great concern farther than to enjoy their health, to be prospered in the world, and to live easy, and whose hearts never knew the want of God's redemption. O that such people knew once their danger, they would imitate this woman, they would go out and cry after him, and not rest till he had shewn them mercy!

I had observed that the disciples were for sending her away; and I know some think they meant, Lord, give her what she wants, and send her away! But I rather believe they were offended, and thought she is a heathen, and as they did not know Jesus was come to be their Saviour, but thought the family of Israel only was elected out of all nations, and the rest reprobated, therefore they besought him to send her away; and I do not doubt would have been pleased if their Master had said to her, Get thee hence to the gods of the land, and let them help thee; thou hast despised the



the God of Israel, he also has despised thee. Thou hast no right to the blessing of Jacob, depart from me. But Jesus could not do so ; he loved both Jews and Gentiles, and was not willing either should perish, but have eternal life.

However, it was enough to damp all her hopes of mercy, when his own disciples besought him to send her away ; but her great trust for mercy made her press on yet, till Jesus himself made her an answer. My dear friends, I mean ye who are apt to be discouraged, learn hence, that though the children of God, the disciples and followers of Christ, should seem to be against you and slight you, that therefore, and alone on that account, you should not faint ; their Master is more merciful than they ; and even those are saved by him, who are often despised by their own mother's children : Be of good comfort then till he answers : and resolve to lie at his feet, and if you perish, perish there.

“ Who down at Jesu's feet resolves to lie,  
Jesus has sworn that soul shall never die.”

And now Jesus answered, but to the woman it must have been a cutting and painful answer, “ I am not sent, says he, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” I dare say every joint trembled in her. Methinks I see the poor heart look quite dejected and troubled, not knowing what to reply for very grief ; but the scripture says, she fell down before him. I should have thought indeed, that she would have turned away displeased, or angry, or in despair, for she must have took it for an absolute answer : and had she reasoned much

about the matter, she would have been confirmed, in it, that his not answering a word, and the beseeching of his disciples that he would send her away were plain proofs that he did not love her, and had no mind to shew her mercy: But the Holy Ghost had done much in her heart; for though she could think, I am not of Israel, I am one of the daughters of the uncircumcised, and might have made some melancholy reflections on that head, yet it all served to awaken her the more, to see her soul's estate; for she, no doubt, thought, if it be true that he is the Lord, who is come to save his people from their sins, if he is the Messiah, for whose mercy all the tribes are waiting, and he is sent to none but the lost sheep of the house of Israel; then what will become of me? And thenceforward we hear her no more name her daughter, but she falls down and worships him, saying, "Lord! help me!" As if she had said, Lord, what then shall I do? If thou art only sent to Israel, then I am afraid I shall perish for ever! O Lord help me! But she might think more properly thus, though I am a lost sheep, and though I am not of the house of Israel, he can make me an Israelite indeed, and therefore in the most humble manner, she fell down at his feet and worshipped him. This is a plain and evident proof she believed him to be the Lord; and besides, she believed he could help her, and therefore it was a short but a comprehensive and pretty prayer, "Lord, help me!" As if she would have said, Lord, I came hither on account of my daughter, but I have found I want thee more than her, help me! make me a child of God, a true Israelite. Have mercy upon me!

But our Saviour answers again strangely, "It is not fit to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs." This was the manner in which the Jews treat-  
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ed the Gentiles, and perhaps looked upon them as dogs in the worse sense, namely, such as were not to be reckoned among the flock of the good Shepherd, but such as were without, and who might not and could not enter the fold. But this sounded hard from the mouth of the Saviour of the world, yet we find it had its good end and effect; for the woman did not fall into a rage, and ask in an angry manner, why does he call me dog? If I am the child of a rejected and forsaken people, how can I help it? If it has been my hard lot to be born of uncircumcised parents, and to be educated a heathen, why does he blame me? Can I alter the decree of the Creator, or change my state or nature? No, this was not her reply: If she had not been too deeply convinced of her sin, and wanted so earnestly a Saviour, she might have reasoned thus; but she knew no dogs had ever lived so unclean and had a life as she had done; she knew she was worse than a dog, and, as David confessed, "I am even like a beast before thee:" So she owns, "It is truth Lord!" As if she had said, I am a vile, nasty, polluted, and defiled sinner; but dogs lick up the crumbs which fall from their Master's table; let me only enjoy the least of thy mercies, what thy own people Israel slight and disesteem: O give me but the crumbs which fall, as it were, from their table! And again she said, "Lord, help me." Now Jesus could stand out no longer; he said to her, "O woman! great is thy faith, be it to thee even as thou wilt!" It was as if he had said, Ask any thing, and it shall be done; thy daughter shall be made whole; thy sins be forgiven thee; thou shalt be henceforth of the flock and family of the true Israel; thy name shall be written in heaven; thy place shall be for ever there: "Great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt,"

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It is said she worshipped him before, but now I suppose, she adored with double respect and reverence, and was ready, like Magdalen, to wash his feet with her tears. I dare say she could not tell how to express herself with joy; for so it always is when one has found salvation.

It would not be amiss to observe again, that trouble first brought her to the Lord. Had she met with no uncommon trial in the world; she had probably gone on like others, without ever thinking who or what the Redeemer was! or, it may be, have despised him with the multitude and perished. Before the end was therefore known, it appeared to be a heavy judgment that had befallen her, that her daughter, and perhaps her only child, was so visited; but though it might have given her no small concern and pain, she can now say with the sweet singer of Israel, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted I went wrong, but now I have kept thy word." She is not the only one whom crosses, troubles and disappointments in the world have served as a means to bring them to Jesus Christ. Many have thus been surrounded on every side, and their way hedged up, as it were, with thorns, that they might cry to God in their trouble, and be delivered out of all their distress. It is sometimes necessary that the Lord should serve us as he served Job, and let Satan touch all that we have, that we may learn to have our treasure in heaven, and lay hold on eternal life. Many have lost all that they have had, been forsaken of friends, destitute, persecuted, slighted and despised, inured to disappointments and afflictions, so that their lives have been often bitter. They have been poor and diseased like Lazarus, but, after all, were car-

ried by angels into Abraham's bosom, who else might have perished, had they been beloved and prospered in the world; and after a gay and sensual life ended, after all their honour, glory, fulness, and their easy time was come to a period, and they ready to be dissolved, might possibly have heard, like Dives, "Remember in thy life-time thou hadst thy good things!" O may this never be the case of one who hears me this day! May our dear and wise Lord lay upon us what he will, and disappoint and cross us as he pleases. May we rather live the most troubled and grievous life, and enjoy peace with him in our hearts, and have the assurance of our part in the world to come, than be ever so free and uninterrupted in all riches, honours, and pleasures, and lose eternal happiness. / Look upon the woman of Canaan, she was once a poor unhappy creature, a woman like Hannah, of a sorrowful spirit, and acquainted with grief. She was once in tears and prayers at the feet of our Saviour, when every thing seemed to make against her. But where is she now? Yonder, she adores before the same feet of God her Saviour in eternal life! She now thanks him for all that happened to her; she now sees his tender mercies through all he suffered to come upon her, and worships before that gracious and good Lamb of God, who came to seek and save that which was lost, and to be a friend of the friendless, the husband of the widow, and a refuge and sanctuary for all ready to perish and oppressed of the devil.

Be not then confused and unhappy about it, ye dear people, if you should meet with many trials, if it should appear as if you was singled out to endure hardships or distress, still speak to our Saviour and say, "Have mercy upon me!" If a sense of your sin  
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bows you down and dejects you, still pray, "Have mercy upon me!" If you can't say many words, if you can't speak much, remember it was the case of the woman before us : Her prayer was very short, but it reached the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. It was only, "Lord, help me!" but it prevailed, because it came out of the heart. Our Saviour is not cheated with long prayers, nor must we think, like the heathen, that we are heard for our much speaking. Our God looks upon the heart; and all the churches shall know he judges according to the heart, and not according to our words : Lift up therefore the heart to the Lord; let your tears and sighs speak the unutterable language of your breast. Do not want to say much, nor study fine words, and dead and dry forms to bring before him, it is like offering the lame and blind upon his altar; appear a poor sinner, just as thou art; come a poor diseased soul to be healed, a sick soul to be cured, a trembling and afflicted creature that wants a rest for thy soul, and he will receive thee. If at first thou dost not seem to succeed, do not let thy faith fail, it is his custom to try the children of men. Thus Joseph tried his brethren, and seemed to answer roughly, till their tears and sighs overcame him, and he could not contain no longer, and then he ordered all the Egyptians to withdraw, and burst out into tears himself, and fell upon their necks and kissed them, saying, "I am Joseph," and then all their sorrows and troubles ended in joy and comfort. So our Saviour dealt with the two disciples travelling to Emmaus; at first he blamed them for their incredulity, and being slow of heart to believe; but in a very little while shewed them his hands, and then were the disciples glad: So he used this woman, as if he had no mind to help her,



her, but see only what she found after so many Repulses ; her faith bore her up ; she believed him to be the Lord ; she knew he could help her ; she knew none else could do it, and was resolved not to leave him. Do thou likewise, till he falls upon thy neck and says, I am Jesus ; till he shews thee his hands and thy new name graven there ; till he says, " O Man ! O Woman ! Great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Before I conclude this discourse I must observe, that her faith was what pleased our dear Saviour so much ; and for this, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Enoch, David, Gideon, Sampson, and all the Saints are praised in the Scriptures ; and we meet with many places of this sort, " Thy faith has saved thee," Luke vii. 50. " Thy faith has made thee whole," Luke viii. 48. " If thou believest, thou shalt see the Glory of God," John xi. 40.

These and many of the same nature and strain, confirm to us that blessed doctrine that we are justified and saved through faith, and not by means of our works or deserving. Whenever men suppose our duties, obedience, merits, or good works, are the cause of our salvation, they reject the Head Stone in the corner, and without a foundation build the house upon the sand. The sole cause, reason, and author of our salvation is Jesus Christ. He himself saves us, and by faith we receive in him all we want in time and in eternity. Is our faith little in him ? We shall receive little, yea little else beside death and hell ; and feel to our hurt that we have despised the blood of the covenant, and thought little of God's salvation. Is our faith great in him ? We shall receive much at his hands. " Great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

- We cannot believe too highly of Jesus! We cannot think him more gracious or loving than he is : There is more in him than we can ask or think : He is Almighty God, who has left all in heaven, and in the bosom of his Father, and came down with no other view or design but to redeem lost souls out of the slavery and service of satan, and to open a way for them by his own blood, into the holiest place of all, even heaven itself, whither he is now entered to prepare a place for us. There was no other remedy, he knew nothing we could do was sufficient to atone for our sins, or make up the breach, therefore he said, "Lo ! I come," and has now in his own body made satisfaction to divine justice : He has obtained the right of eternal redemption, and can give it to whom he will. If thou art not of the seed or selected ones of Israel, yet he can save thee. There is not a single soul out of the reach of his mercy. He is Lord of all : He is Lord of the living and of the dead. His hand is not cramped or shortened that it cannot save, or his ear heavy that it cannot hear ; and when it has gone so far, that to all human appearance there is no hope, all things are possible with him, venture then and pray to him, be your case what it will, Lord, help me ! Fix your eyes upon his cross. Trust only and entirely, body and soul, upon ~~that~~ crucified ~~God~~, and worship before his feet, which once burned with anguish, and were red like brass in the furnace ; to him say, "Have mercy upon me !" He has felt your need, and knows how to shew mercy. When no eye pitied us in our fallen estate, or had compassion on us, he saw us in our blood, cast out to the lothing of our persons, and polluted, and had mercy on us. His heart was touched at our fall

fall and loss, and undertook to be our Saviour. Let nothing then take away your confidence in his great and boundless mercy; but let what will try you, yet believe in him, and you shall see the end of the Lord's dealings shall be, to be gracious, merciful, long suffering and of great goodness. Let your faith in him only be great, and it shall be done to you even as you will. You shall find the same loving Redeemer, who dealt thus bountifully with an outcast woman of the Gentiles, still rich in mercy to all them that call upon him in faith,

Let us pray the Holy Ghost to grant us such a deep, and continual sense of our great poverty and need of redemption, and the Redeemer, that till our last moments that may be our inmost hearts prayer, "Have pity upon me! Have mercy upon me! Lord help me!" And may our compassionate high-priest, indeed, have mercy upon us and help us now in this present life, as long as we are strangers and pilgrims in the world; in our last hour, when our strength fails us, and we must go into eternity; and also in the day of judgment, when heaven and earth shall flee before him, and he shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory and judge all nations! Yea then, Lord, especially help us and have mercy upon us, for thy name's sake. In that day, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee.

*Ref. 235 - 222 - 224*

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